

Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee

November Full Committee Minutes

Wednesday November 6, 2019

Present: Neal Baxter, Abigail Johnson, Julia Curran, Adelheid Koski, Barbara Olson, Christian Huelsman, Jim Welsch, Christopher Hoffer, Peter Vader, Aaron Berger, Tamir Ali Mohamud; Matthew Dyrdaahl, Julie Danzl, Rattana Sengsoulichanh, Steve Mahowald, Emily Kettell, Suzanne Murphy, Sarah Stewart, Heather Gillich, Millicent Flowers; Julia Tabbut and Luís Dax, pedestrians

Chair Abigail called the meeting to order at 4:07 PM and asked all present to introduce themselves.

Acceptance of the Minutes for October 2019

Tamir moved to approve the minutes; Barb seconded. Approved.

Remembering Phil Ailiff

PAC member Phil Ailiff died on October 15 of cancer. We shared memories of Phil, and our impressions of him. Phil joined the PAC in 2011, was very active on the subcommittees, and was remembered as a thoughtful, welcoming presence.

Metro Transit Agency Partner Update—Steve Mahowald

The big item we are working on is Network Next, Metro Transit's 20-year plan. We want to know what our riders want, so please fill out the survey. The core of the planning is service improvements to local and express routes, and building more arterial bus rapid transit lines. We're also looking at how our service meshes with the new scooters, rental bikes and other transportation alternatives; the customer experience, especially speed and reliability (note the addition of red bus lanes on Hennepin to add speed during rush hour); adding bus shelters; and our live information line.

Policy trade-offs are a concern always. With limited money, where do we invest for maximum return? Steve discussed the following sets of values:

frequency versus span (longer service)

coverage—more areas served versus more service in focused areas

days of service—concentrating on weekdays, or on weekends

transfers—more routes with less service versus fewer routes with more service

directness—slower, more direct, shorter walks versus faster, longer walks

spacing stops—speed versus longer walk to the bus stop

frequency versus coverage

the importance of transfers

The Regional Transit Design Guidelines, in Appendix G of the Metro Council's Transportation Policy Plan, lay out the details in matters of development density, market areas for transit, and other

particulars that go into planning the future of transit. Steve has been involved with planning Park & Ride stations for decades. He makes a good case that building a station in Foley with 1000 parking spaces created 1000 advocates for transit in the exurbs and diminished car density.

Steve went into some detail about how business has worked with Metro Transit to create a “great transit city”. The downtown business people pushed for double-width transit lanes on Marquette and 2nd Avenue. Now 54% of commuters leave the inner core of downtown on transit; 4% of the vehicles at rush hour carry 52% of the people.

His parting words were: we need development density to maximize transit building and use. The suburban communities know that, which is why the proposed stations along the Southwest line's route are being built up already.

Curran: how fast can we build capacity?

Steve: one and a half to two years, is the lead time for all factors.

Huelsman: talk about the level of outreach to access new riders.

Steve: our outreach is at a very high level. Our outreach people are reaching out to everyone living near the Southwest transit line, for instance.

Hoffer: how about modernizing your fleet?

Steve: we are moving toward electric buses very quickly.

MD: do your surveys reflect the different needs of different users?

Steve: yes, our survey asks where you board, for instance. Bloomington and other cities are building density in the network.

Jim: how does the driver shortage matter?

Steve: we've tried to make thoughtful, strategic choices when we have to cut service.

Adelheid: will buses change to accommodate more senior mobility devices?

Steve: the arterial lines are built with wider aisles, seats facing inward not forward, to make more aisle space for passengers.

CIP Process Update and Recommendations—Abigail Johnson

Matthew reviewed the City budget process, and how the list of capital improvement projects (CIPs) is drawn up. The PAC will send up a resolution recommending a list of CIPs later in the winter.

Abigail continued. The subcommittees have already begun discussing ideas for CIPs; we'll continue this discussion for a few months. Last year, we recommended programs (like Safe Streets and sidewalk gaps). This year we'll change our approach. We'll propose new program ideas like making walking safer and more enjoyable, which complement the Transportation Action Plan. We also want to remind the CLIC (which recommends to the City Council which CIPs to fund at which level) that PAC's goals are in harmony with the City's goals.

Abigail read through the proposals already generated in the subcommittees, while members proposed others, such as:

- no waiting at street lights; crossing the street is automatic for pedestrians as the light turns green immediately

- unobstructed flow on the sidewalks

- side-by-side walking is standard
- “Minneapolis prioritizes pedestrians” is official City policy, which we should say so
- create a formal program using temporary materials to implement improvements quickly
- fund neighborhood greenways
- improve pedestrian safety around freeway ramps
- improve pedestrian safety by installing crosswalks where absent
- boost funding for existing pedestrian CIPs
- 50% of CIP funding should support pedestrians not cars
- way-finding signs of various kinds
- create a bench, public toilet, and drinking fountain CIP
- fund sidewalks that drain runoff water
- tie City goals to the TAP & Vision Zero
- re-program signal lights for pedestrian speeds, especially for elders and slower pedestrians, using countdowns and leading pedestrian interval

Infrastructure & Engineering Subcommittee Report—Barb Olson

Kelsey Fogt told us about the Grant Street and 1st Avenue Bikeway, near the Convention Center. The project's goal is to provide a protected bikeway on 1st Avenue from 15th Street to Grant, and to continue on 2nd Avenue up to 12th Street. This will complement the planned Whittier/Lyndale bikeway.

We asked if the traffic lanes on the east side of the median in 2nd Ave. could be closed. Kelsey said the Convention Center people like that idea, but no decision has been made yet.

Steve: Metro Transit uses that median to drop off passengers going to the Convention Center.

The project is scheduled for construction in the summer of 2020. We'll see further progress on this project later.

The committee meeting continued with a discussion of the CIP process. We had a lively discussion, and we agreed that we want the allocations for CIPs to reflect the goal of making Minneapolis a pedestrian safe and walkable city. It's time to focus on the needs of pedestrians, not cars.

Programs & Policies Subcommittee Report—Peter Vader

The first item on our agenda was a discussion of the right turn on red rule. Peter learned that the Institute of Traffic Engineers recently rescinded their 1986 guidelines for these turns. At that time the ITE considered that the gas saved by cars spending less time at stop lights was a more important concern than “insignificant” safety issues. The ITE will issue new guidelines in 2020. Peter read a resolution; Neal seconded; and a discussion ensued, less about right turn on red, and more about the usefulness of passing this resolution on to the Council when the Transportation Action Plan and Vision Zero are still pending. Sarah suggested that, since the ITE has very little information on this issue, and the PAC knows less than that, we should sit on the resolution, pending more hard data about this. Hoffer moved to remand the resolution to the P&P committee; Neal seconded. Approved.

Announcements

Sarah: this is my last day on the PAC. I'm working for the St. Paul Public Schools now, and Heather Gillich will replace me.

Curran: we've scheduled another protest/vigil about pedestrian deaths on Lyndale for Tuesday, November 12.

Neal moved to adjourn; Barb seconded. Approved, and adjourned at 6:03 PM.